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ABSTRACT

An important issue in the education reform debate is the effect of comparatively low salaries on teacher quality. Prose literacy scores are one of the best available measures of verbal ability, a factor identified by research as being associated with teacher quality. If teachers have lower prose literacy scores relative to college graduates in other occupations, this could indicate that relatively low salaries may not be attracting (or keeping) the most skilled college graduates to (in) the teaching profession. If, however, the literacy levels of teachers are no lower than those of their counterparts in other occupations, then other benefits (job security, a shorter work year, the opportunity to work with children, good retirement benefits, etc.) may be more important for attracting quality teachers than salary alone. Prose literacy scores, labor market outcomes, and other characteristics of full-time employed bachelor's degree recipients, by occupation in 1992 are presented. Analysis shows that in 1992 teachers had literacy skills similar to private-sector executives and managers, engineers, physicians, writers and artists, social workers, sales representatives, education administrators, and registered nurses. Teachers also tended to work fewer weeks per year than other college graduates, but at lower pay. (NAV)

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ED 392 774

INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

LITERACY OF TEACHERS

November 1995

National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Washington, DC

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INDICATOR OF THE MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

November 1995

Literacy of teachers

An important issue in the education reform debate is the effect of comparatively low salaries on teacher quality. Prose literacy scores are one of the best available measures of verbal ability, a factor identified by research as being associated with teacher quality. If teachers have lower prose literacy scores relative to college graduates in other occupations, this could indicate that relatively low salaries may not be attracting (or keeping) the most skilled college graduates to (in) the teaching profession. If, however, the literacy levels of teachers are no lower than those of their counterparts in other occupations, other benefits (e.g., job security, a shorter work year, the opportunity to work with children, good retirement benefits, etc.) may be more important for attracting quality teachers than salary alone.

- **In 1992, teachers had literacy skills similar to private-sector executives and managers, engineers, physicians, writers and artists, social workers, sales representatives, education administrators, and registered nurses. Scientists were the only professionals who had measurably higher prose literacy skills than teachers.**
- **Although teachers had literacy skills similar to college graduates in many other occupations, their earnings were often substantially less. However, the average number of weeks worked in 1991 was lower for teachers than for college graduates in many other occupations.**

Prose literacy scores, labor market outcomes, and other characteristics of full-time employed bachelor's degree recipients, by occupation: 1992

Occupation	Average prose literacy scores	Average annual earnings in 1991	Average weekly wage last week	Average weeks worked in 1991	Average age	Percentage with graduate degrees	Percentage female
All bachelor's degree recipients	**334**	**[1] $38,530**	**[1] $805**	**[1] 49**	**[1] 40**	**[1] 35**	**[1] 38**
Scientists	[1] 354	39,320	805	49	36	43	21
Lawyers and judges	352	[1] 71,223	[1] 1871	49	41	[1] 94	17
Accountants and auditors	344	[1] 38,463	[1] 832	[1] 50	[1] 37	[1] 28	[1] 38
Private-sector executives and managers	341	[1] 56,044	[1] 1,052	[1] 51	41	[1] 33	[1] 26
Postsecondary teachers	340	[1] 47,867	[1] 924	[1] 48	[1] 45	[1] 90	[1] 29
Engineers	339	[1] 48,408	[1] 952	[1] 50	41	[1] 32	[1] 8
Physicians	335	[1] 121,120	[1] 2,454	49	44	[1] 100	[1] 16
Teachers[2]	**333**	**25,983**	**568**	**45**	**42**	**48**	**71**
Writers and artists	332	[1] 29,507	[1] 589	[1] 46	[1] 39	[1] 33	[1] 47
Social workers	332	[1] 26,739	[1] 551	[1] 50	[1] 40	[1] 38	[1] 60
Sales representatives	[1] 328	[1] 39,872	[1] 900	[1] 49	[1] 42	[1] 10	[1] 23
Education administrators	[1] 326	[1] 44,130	[1] 888	[1] 50	[1] 49	[1] 79	[1] 57
Registered nurses	[1] 326	[1] 33,981	[1] 741	[1] 49	[1] 38	[1] 16	[1] 88
Sales supervisors and proprietors	[1] 316	[1] 32,720	[1] 669	[1] 51	[1] 41	[1] 21	[1] 20

[1] Statistically significant difference from teachers.

[2] Includes prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, elementary and secondary school teachers, teachers in special education, and teachers not elsewhere categorized.

NOTE: Individuals scoring between 326 and 375 were able to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy passages. For example, at proficiency level 328, test-takers were able to state in writing an argument made in a lengthy newspaper article.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

U.S. Department of Education **Office of Educational Research and Improvement**

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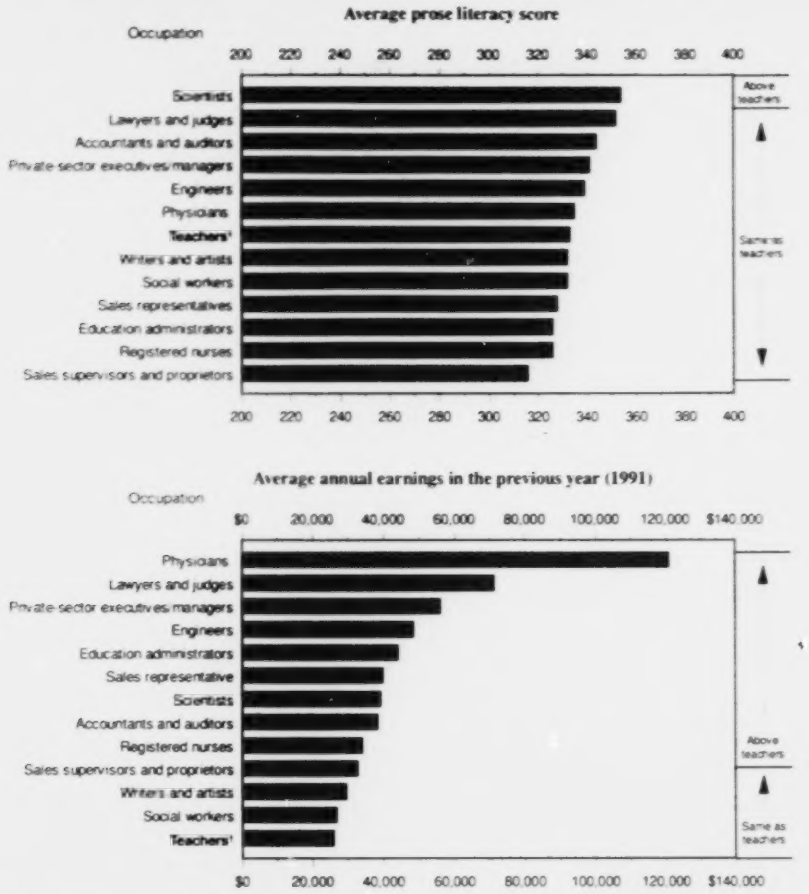

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SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

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